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To combat poverty in the Ozarks, a Total Community Action Program is recommended. It involves a community educational development section setting up a curriculum involving problems of education, health, community, welfare, recreation, and economic opportunities. Key leaders should confer often about problems in their counties.

A Revitalized Educational Community Action Program would revamp the education system starting with nursery school. Elementary and high school would be affected. Post high school education would be set up.

Special remedial and non-curriculum programs would be set up. These would involve nursery school, guidance and counseling, recreation opportunities and centers and could be made available for tutorial and remedial summertime programs.

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Exhibit
Johnson
McG. —
Reiser

POSITION PAPER ON THE OZARKS

Prepared by Emanuel Reiser
June 18, 1964

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The Ozark area region as discussed in this paper includes counties in three States, southern Missouri (34 counties), northern Arkansas (12 counties) and a strip of 9 counties from the tip of northeast Oklahoma southward (see exhibit I). The population of this area is approximately 679,000 persons exclusive of the Springfield, Missouri metropolitan area with its population of 126,000.

There are few cities with a population of 5,000 or more. This is predominantly a hilly wooded area. Aside from main highways, many areas are poorly serviced by roads or other means of transportation. The area has been characterized by out-migration of the majority of its younger people and in many of the inaccessible areas the age of the head of the household is over 50. Farming in the Ozarks is limited to subsistence farming with the exception of small numbers of farmers who raise specialized herds of beef and dairy cattle. The slow rate of growth of agriculture incomes and a decline in agricultural employment has further slowed the growth in services and trades in the supporting towns. Increases in manufacturing employment is not rapid nor extensive enough to absorb all people seeking employment. Consequently large numbers are unemployed or underemployed. There have been increases in the region in (1) miscellaneous manufacturing, (2) contract construction,

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(3) apparel manufacturing, (4) and retail trade (tourism) but not sufficient to absorb those looking for work locally who have been displaced from productive jobs in agriculture and forestry. As disclosed in an "Economic Study of the Proposed Buffalo National River" prepared for the National Park Service by the University of Arkansas, May 1963 and covering five typical counties in the Northern Arkansas Ozarks (Baxter, Boone, Marion, Newton and Searcy counties), the region has shown some economic growth but it has not been sufficient to prevent sharp population losses and their inhibitory effects. The report states "From 1950 to 1960, the five county study area experienced a 17 percent decrease in population and an estimated out-migration rate of over 32 percent. Per capita income, in 1960 was about $1,100; and average family income amounted to approximately $2,500. The level of income represented is about 20 percent below the State average, and less than half as high as the national average." There have been many attempts to improve the economy of the Ozarks region by developing the areas' lakes and rivers and transportation networks for recreational purposes and to attract tourists. The climate of the Ozarks area is such that from seven to eight months a year many visitors might well be attracted. The Buffalo River study above indicates that if its projections hold true, by 1970, personal income in these 5 counties would be increased by $7.3 million or 12 percent as a result of the proposed project and that 1,500 jobs in non-farm occupations would develop within the same period. Such accomplishments would be a major step towards solving this particular area's unemployment and underemployment problems. Admittedly there is great

potential for developing the Ozarks into recreational areas. The employment in recreational pursuits will not suffice to absorb great numbers of the unemployed or underemployed at a living wage.

The population age structure of this area is top heavy at age group above 45 years of age as compared to the United States as a whole. In fact the Buffalo River study revealed that in the Ozarks the median age of head of the family is 35.6 years as compared to 29.5 years for the United States. This presents a problem of retraining many of the heads of household for new occupational careers. Other individuals who remain in this area will need basic literacy training as well as comprehensive vocational programs in order to be effectively placed in stable employment. As salary levels in service occupations relating to hotels and motels are less compared to other employment in skilled fields relatively few young people will be employed in these fields. Even though population projections do not show as sharp a decline in population for the Ozark region between 1960 and 1970 as between 1950 and 1960, the out-migration of young people particularly, will continue. The Missouri Highway Department projections for the Ozark region expects some decrease in population for the region but on the whole the area would remain fairly stable because of the out-migration to date and because the area is relatively undeveloped. See exhibit 2. I suspect that because of limited employment opportunities in this relatively undeveloped areas of Missouri that youth will continue to move to the larger cities both within and outside the State. The in-migration to the Ozarks however of retired persons

from both government and industry has been increasing at an accelerated rate as the aging population of the country seeks a good place to retire within limited means where living costs are not too high. Individuals retiring to the Ozarks area on combined social security and other pensions of $300 a month can live comfortably in these areas. Suprisingly enough, this in-migration may well have raised the educational level of some of the rural areas and supplied some educational leadership and resources to the Ozark areas. For example, during 1962-63 the average number of college hours in preparation for teaching in Missouri public schools was 146.7 for the state as a whole, 7 counties in the Ozarks respectively, had teachers who averaged 151.1 hours (see exhibit 3). It is the opinion of knowledgeable people that this increase in hours of teacher education is due both to in-migration of individuals who are supplementing their pensions by teaching at the high school level as well as residents of these counties who have taken advantage of the Missouri State Department of Education's program of subsidizing educational courses for upgrading employed teachers within recent years.

Current Status of Education in the Ozarks

Compulsory Education Laws

The compulsory education laws for the States of Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma are contained in the appendix.

Arkansas

Arkansas requires compulsory attendance from ages 7-15 inclusive. However children who have completed the 8th grade are exempt if their services are needed to support a widowed mother. The age for employment permits is under 16 but no employment is permitted under 14. There is no provision for continuation or part-time attendance. There is no provision for a special census of children who are handicapped, only a record of deaf mutes. No doubt this results in many children with vision, hearing, and other handicaps not having their needs met. A special survey (copy attached-see appendix, exhibit 4) prepared by A. G. Thompson, Supervisor of Special Education and Frank A. Cannaday, Supervisor, Research and Statistics of the Arkansas State Department of Education, published in January 1963 disclosed that in 14 school district, 351 children had vision disabilities, 202 hearing disabilities, 290 crippled, 874 speech disabilities, 1,058 mental disabilities, and 581 other disabilities. There is no doubt but that due to the lack of a compulsory program of medical attention many children located in the Ozark counties, with disabilities limiting their ability to acquire education, are not receiving the proper medical attention.

The study further disclosed that the parcent of handicaps decreases as the enrollment size of the district increases for vision, hearing, crippling, mental or learning difficulutiez and other. Thus there must be a greater percentage of youth with handicaps in the sparsely settled Ozark regions.

Missouri

The compulsory school age in Missouri is 7-16. Children who are 14, regularly and lawfully engaged in some desirable employment and excused by the superintendent or by a court of competent jurisdiction may be exempted from school attendance. Continuation or part-time school attendance is required of children under 16 lawfully engaged in regular employment and of all minors under 18 who have not completed the elementary school course and who are not attending the regular school day. Attendance at these schools is required 4 hours per week between 8 A. M. and 5 P. M. for a period not less than the school term. Unless waived by the State Board for Vocational Education, the establishment of such schools is mandatory in districts where as many as 25 employment certificates for children under 16 are in force.

Oklahoma

The compulsory school attendance age in Oklahoma is 7-18. Exemption from school attendance is made for those who are 16 and have completed high school; who are 16 and excused under agreement between judge and school authorities; in an emergency if parents so request. There is no provision for continuation or part-time school attendance.

In many of the sparsely populated rural areas these laws are not stringently enforced. In fact because of the need to supplement earnings of the head of the household, many children leave school at 15 years of age.

There is very little being done in the mountain area to resolve the problems of education in the 20th century. The vicious cycle of poverty from generation to generation has left the area with insufficient tax funds to maintain an adequate base for educational purposes. For example, in order to maintain even the present limited educational program it has been necessary, for the State of Missouri last year, to supply 57% of the funds for education in 7 selected Ozark counties (see exhibit 5) as opposed to 33% for the State as a whole.

For these same counties, the wealth per average daily attendance was under $4,000 whereas the State average was over $10,000. Even though State support attempts to equalize educational standards by supplying more State monies, these funds only bring the local educational systems to a bare minimum.

The emphasis on reorganization of school districts made by State Departments of Education in an attempt to consolidate school districts thus providing better teachers, enriched curriculum, more auxiliary services, etc. has led in some cases to limiting funds for sub-standard schools in order to effect school reorganization. For example, under Title III of NDEA, the Missouri State Department of Education policy has been to limit aid for the acquisition of equipment to improve mathematics, science, and modern foreign language to the larger schools that have the personnel and class size available to benefit from these funds. Thus one can see that the small rural schools, further deprived of funds, are falling further behind in their battle to educate Ozark youth.

Recommended- A Total Community Action Program to Combat Poverty

The program I envision can be put into operation at once in selected rural poverty areas.

The most difficult problem in effectively carrying out social, economic, and educational change in any community is the inability to secure indigenous leadership to plan, develop, and carry to fruition a total educational plan. There are many forward-looking leaders who have a divergence of opinion but because of lack of knowledge about the interrelationships of social, economic, and political forces coupled with emotionalized thinking and lack of information about these problems are immobilized. Their reason tells them the steps that are necessary but they are limited to local pressures and lack of effective informed community opinion to take action to combat such educational problems as small schools, limited curriculum, insufficient educational resources, apathy of the community towards the lack of educational youth programs, library programs, recreation programs, and health programs. There is insufficient information available concerning a total community approach.

My first recommendation is the establishment of a community educational development section in the State Department of Education in conjunction with the State University and other universities in each of the three States which contain segments of the Ozarks. The State Departments in cooperation with the universities should arrange on an experimental basis for 2 or 3 neighboring Ozark counties to sent to a community

educational development seminar those individuals in the power structure of these communities, i.e. business leaders, political leaders, church leaders, educational leaders, and always including women leaders.

A curriculum should be developed touching on community problems affecting these areas which are well known to the State Department of Education staff, extension service personnel, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, etc. The areas of leadership, communication and alliances to implement community action programs should be thoroughly explored.

The curriculum should be written so that each section would be detailed and deal with problems of education, health, welfare, recreation, economic opportunities, community reorganization, etc. The curriculum should serve as a reference text for community discussion when these individuals return to their respective communities. There should be a section in the curriculum on how neighboring counties can work effectively in establishing the type of educational program that can reduce and in time abolish poverty. The seminar should stress action and involvement by the participants in developing a community program.

There should be opportunity for these key leaders from neighboring counties to meet socially after regular class hours with staff and among themselves to visit effective educational youth employment, recreation, and welfare programs in the State and out of the State in nearby areas.

When these leaders have completed their training program they should be encouraged and assisted to set up their own leadership stimulation programs in their own community using both local, regional, and Statewide consultants to assist as needed when it is felt the community is ready to request and accept outside aid.

The State Department and the universities should set up a digest of research and new community educational practices that have been effective in helping solve problems in various rural areas. Periodically the information should be made available to local communities.

This program should be a continuing one conducted at the university or State Department of Education initially with conferences held every year at different county seats in the Ozarks where community leaders who have developed approaches to solving problems in education, welfare, recreation, etc. should deliver reports and make available material on their programs. Within county governments there should be dissemination of the benefits of multiple county cooperation. Perhaps in time, through mutual work, trust, and experience there could be combined rural county operations of area problems just as there are in city problems of mass transportation and urban renewal. This would result in a community leadership assembly on both a Statewide and regional basis. Eventually this type of organization could be duplicated in other regions in the United States to aid in the war on poverty.

It should be the purpose of this local leadership assembly movement to encourage local remedial action programs and attempt to institute new types of programs in communities that hitherto were either not aware of the existence or did not realize the applicability of these unknown programs to the solution of local problems.

A Revitalized Educational Community Action Program for Ozark Communities

If we are to effectively combat the immediate effects of economic discrimination and poverty, we must lower the age at which our public schools accept responsibility for children. In fact, the first attack on the problem should be made in the home. The mother-to-be should as early as possible in all areas, especially in remote rural areas be exposed to the world of books. Rural library bookmobiles should visit in the hills and hollows of the Ozarks and books made available in quantity. The impoverishment of an environment where many parents have withdrawn from school at an early age and are limited in knowledge about the outside community leads to the lack of ability to stimulate and inform their children verbally of the benefits of education.

Nursery School Level

At the age of three, children in these areas where sparsity of population is a factor should have a mobile school nursery unit visiting central areas where mothers could bring their children. Children could develop peer group relationships. A curriculum could be designed to teach youngsters verbal and perceptual skills they need in order to learn to read and also to bolster their sense of self. Emphasis should be placed on the concept of getting across the notion, first that every object has a name and second the more sophisticated concept that objects may have a number of different labels each referring to different attributes. A pattern of successful accomplishments of many small tasks lends to an improved self-image. The fact that the mother would attend with the child would reinforce and clearly demonstrate the importance of education to the child.

The child's verbal ability and social adjustment would improve. His experiences would be broadened and would be a topic of conversation at home. The motivation of the child who has learned facts would be heightened and the success pattern rather than failure pattern would take root early in life. At the kindergarten and first grade level this child would then no doubt do well on reading readiness tests, have an interest in language and be motivated towards a success pattern for future education.

Elementary School Level

Due to limited funds and sparsity of population, many schools have insufficient funds to provide a well-rounded curriculum at the elementary school level. Art, music, and language classes are practically non-existent. Many school buildings are obsolete and not conducive to developing an atmosphere where one can learn readily or easily. The calibre of teachers at the elementary school level has to be improved by in-service training courses. At this level of education in sparsely settled areas, mobile school units, well equipped, capable of seating at least 40 children could be used. Consultants in remedial education, health practices and specialized courses should be available for consultation. For those children who have hearing, speech, and vision impairments, medical services should be made available by mobile medical units as many of the parents in this area will not permit their children to remain overnight in city hospitals.

The discovery and correction of these defects at an early age will certainly enhance the probability of success both in school and later life.

High School Level

The problem at the high school level in the Ozarks region is the lack of schools of sufficient size to accommodate a comprehensive general-vocational program. One anthropological study of a typical Missouri community, "Plainville 15 Years Later" by Art Gallaher, Jr. published by Columbia University Press, 1961 discusses the functional adequacy of the high school curriculum in this typical Ozark community and describes some of the major problems in education in sub-standard rural economic areas in many regions of the United States. A major area of specialization of small secondary rural schools in the United States is vocational agriculture. The author notes that vocational agriculture education was resisted by the Plainville community when first introduced in 1933. However in 1940 the program was well integrated in the school curriculum. From 1941-1950, 84 boys were graduated from Plainville High during this period and of these, 77 took two to four years of vocational agriculture training. However only 15 of the 77 ultimately entered farming either in Plainville (Hickory County, Missouri) or elsewhere. The only other vocational courses offered are commerce and home economics. In addition to these subjects, students take academic courses in health, citizenship, history, speech, mathematics through algebra, biology, music, and English.

However, due to the small number of credits approved by the State Department of education, students have little selection during their four years of high school. With this background, students compete in the city labor markets or in the case of a few, enter colleges poorly prepared. Interviews with students revealed that many are not concerned about curriculum deficiencies but rather feel that their main objective is the high school diploma-- the acquisition of an "education" being somewhat incidental. The students' attitudes are shared by many parents who unfortunately are often more interested in the high school athletic program, the disciplinary ability of certain teachers, or school board matters than in academic matters.

Such community attitudes concern some teachers and parents who in their more sarcastic moments, criticize a system which sometimes graduates students who can hardly read. The attitudes expressed above exist not only in the Ozarks but in many other areas of the United States. The community action program outlined earlier in this program, I believe, could well be the key to changing these attitudes and opinions.

Because of the limited curriculum, community attitude, and occupational outlook of the boys in this typical Ozark community, the occupational career choices of a group of high school English students, all juniors and seniors from varying social levels, as expressed in their themes revealed the following preferences for

occupations after graduation; of 14 boys, 6 chose mechanics, 2 automobile repairman, 4 aircraft repairman, 3 farmers, 3 laborers, one a veterinarian but does not want to go to college and another wishes to study law. An indication of the lack of a comprehensive vocational program in the Ozarks is that 8 of the 14 boys expect to receive education in the military service which will prepare them for future civilian vocations. They are acutely aware that their parents cannot afford additional educational costs. Between 1919 and 1953--562 students were gradu.. ed from the local high school and 82% moved from the county. From 1934 to 1953, only 27 of 358 graduates entered college the year after high school. No figures are available on those who were graduated from college but the estimates are invariably low.

There is no doubt but at the high school level the key to quality education in the Ozarks is the consolidation of small schools into larger schools. However discussions with school officials in both Missouri and Arkansas reveal that 350 students at high school level would be about the best one could hope for in a consolidated school and to establish the type of curriculum necessary for a comprehensive high school would take at least 600 students. Moreover the loss of population in Arkansas, for example, where minimum district size was established at 350, by law in 1948, has decreased in more than 100 school districts to less than 300 by 1964. Thus the problem of decreasing younger population leaves the area with a proportionately less able citizenry to undertake school consolidation and give the youth the education so urgently needed for the technological age of today.

However, there are means available to effect consolidation with the aid of Federal and State funds at present, if community leadership could be galvanized into action.

For example, with good main roads, high school students could be picked up by bus and transported 40 miles each way to a comprehensive vocational technical and general high school. Under the Vocational Education Act of 1963, Federal funds can be used for 50% of the construction cost of an area technical vocational school; State, local, or foundation funds could be used for general education. This idea of an area vocational school in the Ozarks has been discussed in both Oklahoma and Arkansas and the Industrial and Agricultural Departments of the University of Missouri. For example, E. Max Hunter at the University of Missouri wrote a thesis in 1963 on "Need for Interest in and Means of Supporting an Area Vocational School for Miller, Moniteau, and Morgan Counties." This area is just outside the Ozark Region of Missouri.

The area technical vocational school should have skill centers; the curriculum should be so designed to allow transfer from vocational to general education and vice versa. There should be opportunity and space set aside to train functional illiterates and others in both basic English and improved reading skills. Those who have socio-economic handicaps and those who have dropped out of school or who have graduated and are out of work should have training opportunities in these area schools. Poverty funds can make a major contribution in this area. This concept of comprehensive area schools is

imperative if adequate training and placement of Ozark youth for jobs in this area or out of State at a living wage in our highly industrialized society are to be found.

Post High School Education

After Ozark youth have attended high school, either academic or vocational courses, the need for additional training becomes more acute in order to obtain and hold employment in industry and as most of the Ozark youth may well be leaving the area to compete with graduates whose secondary school curriculum has included more specialized course work than available to them, every attempt should be made to establish post high school and technical junior or community college centers. Possibly areas of Camp Leonard Wood in Missouri or Camp Chafee in Arkansas or other excess army installations could be used for post high school technical and junior college courses. These courses should include a broad curriculum in the new technologies; the tourist industry which offers hope for employment to some Ozark youth; possibly such expanding employment fields as real estate, finance, and insurance could be considered; and even the possibility of 6 months of education and 6 months on-the-job training in other areas of Missouri.

Consideration should be given at this level to the possibility of residential schools for those traveling long distances. Education at post-high school level for those able and willing should be borne by the State and local communities if at all possible.

Upon completion of training, placement of graduates should be made through the U. S. Employment Service. In order to effectively place individual graduates, the employment service will have to survey all jobs by small areas and supply advance information about job openings in each occupational field.

For the majority of graduates coming from low socio-economic levels, both transportation expenses and six months resettlement allowance should be granted. In addition, a youth counselor trained in guidance and social work concepts should be attached to the local employment service covering the new area of settlement. This is essential in helping an individual from a rural area adjust in an urban area.

The above description, I believe, outlines the type of program that involves all members of the community in a program of upward mobility through the educational structure of the community.

Special Remedial and Non-Curriculum Programs for the Ozarks Region

1. Nursery school programs as outlined in this paper are recommended for health and educational purposes.

2. Counseling and guidance programs covering groups of counties should be instituted.

3. In the field of recreation, youth hostels could be set up at very nominal fees and travel encouraged for high school and college youths during the summer months. This would help the economy of the area as well as dispel the isolation of many Ozark areas. In the same vein, summer camps could be arranged at army installations, at State parks or even subsidized by the poverty program to house thousands of youngsters from St. Louis, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and eastern Arkansas. These experiences might well do more good in ameliorating racial and regional tension and result in the acceptance of cultural differences between city and rural folk.

Within the Ozark communities, organized recreational community centers are necessary. Children and youth should participate in cultural projects, art, painting, and music as well as physical activities. Adults should have organized recreational programs especially for retired persons.

4. Psychological, school social work, speech and hearing specialists as part of a mobile team moving into the inaccessible areas is a much needed service in the area.

5. Federal funds could be made available for tutorial and remedial summertime programs. The State and local universities could arrange for students in their last two years of college to spend summers working under university or college direction in special remedial and upgrading programs in Ozark communities.

We have only begun to fight. Let's change the discussion stage to one of community action.